

Mapping Identity: Narrating a Place-Based Personal Story

“Place is the fabric of our lives, memory and identity are stitched through it. Without having somewhere of one’s own, a place that is home, freedom is an empty word”

Alastair Bonnett from *Unruly Places: Lost Spaces, Secret Cities, and Other Inscrutable Geographies*

Learning Objectives: First, let’s read the learning objectives for this activity: 1) Understand the role of place in shaping people’s individual histories and identities; 2) Articulate one’s place-based autobiography.

Learning Outcome: By the end of the activity, participants will be able to tell a personal story reconstructed based on the recollection of memories associated with particular places and spaces.

Often, when asking students to tell us their biography and when teaching about an important figure in the target culture, we often overemphasize chronology without a strong enough consideration given to geography. The use of geospatial technologies allows interactions of place, space, time, and scale to be more obvious, allowing us to develop the ability to answer not only “where?” but “why there?” and “what does it mean?” In this activity, you will learn how to create place-based individual and group autobiographies.

Instructions:

- Take a moment to reflect on your personal story: How the places where you once lived or visited have shaped your cultural and language identity;
- Pin 3-5 significant places on this Google map that can tell others about you and your identity - <https://rb.gy/17d1e>
- Add a brief annotation for each pin. Feel free to attach any photos and videos that indicate why the location is significant. Use the questions below as your guide.
- Connect the pins on the map and consider the areas where you and your classmates’ locations overlap.
- Discuss your selections with your group members
- Post-Activity Reflection: **What did you learn about yourself from this activity? What did you learn about your group mates from their place-based stories?**

Questions to think about when choosing your significant places:

1. If you were to describe yourself in three words, and those words had to be concrete places on the map, what would those locations be?
2. What place or location do you associate with the happiest, saddest, most fulfilling times of your life?
3. What location represents your personality, your values, and your identity?